sonny angel.

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by hcneymooners (romqntics)

Summary

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>
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>
> “But it helps me live a little longer if I hear you say it.”
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> Gale’s eyes fill inexplicably with tears. He wants nothing more than to kiss him.
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> “Oh, honey,” John murmurs in his low voice. “You really *did* miss me, huh?”

⋆

after the war; a reunion.

Notes

i wrote this to highschool lover by air. i love them so much.

See the end of the work for more notes

Time seems to stretch forever after Gale receives the letter. His sister teases him sweetly, her legs languishing across their chaise as she makes casually fun remarks about him and Bucky. The tree in the yard of their parents' home seems to grow taller every moment he looks out of the window. Its branches cradle the sky, the leaves the color of a duck's egg in the dappled sunlight. The trunk is firm underneath the brave hands of his mother. He laughs as he watches Meatball attempt to climb its long body only to slide down in a tumble of fur.

Doris pokes him with her toe, her leg extended perfectly down with the soft arch of her foot. He turns to look at her, curls spilling over the back of the couch, soft blue eyes that are a mirror of his own. She smiles coyly and he knows it'll be another question about the letter bursting out of her. There's a little yelp from outside the window and Gale looks out to see his mother spinning in dizzying circles with Meatball at the other end.

"Mmm. So, what did he say this time?"

Gale smiles softly and rolls his eyes. He and Doris had practically fallen out of the womb together, minutes behind each other as if the space had been too empty without someone else. They didn't mind how much they needed each other. Family was what the Clevens did. They were so much like each other: bright, social, and curious. Doris had a lesser hold on anger than Gale did, though. But he supposes that's fair. She was always cast aside by accident, ignored in favor of him.

"He's coming home, that's all. He's invited all of us, not just me, to have dinner with him when he gets in. He'll be at the the townhouse."

Gale secretly wishes that it would stay spring forever. It was the best time, with boroughs of flowers tangled within each other and flashes of pinks and yellows down the hill, moments of beginnings before you got to see the ocean at the end of the coast.

"I wonder what he'll think of me now. I know—I know I look different than he remembers, with my hair cut a little shorter. Mom says my face is thinner and my clothes aren't like what he's been seeing in Paris—"

"—He will think that you are the best thing since sliced bread as he has since the day you two met," Doris interrupts, swinging her bare feet off of his lap to meet the cool kiss of the dark wood beneath them.

“Doris, he didn’t like me when we first met.”

“He was just acting out to get you to look at him. The point still stands.”

Gale laughs and begins to stand.

“There’s something there, Gale. If a man looked at me how John looks at you, I’d be married with six kids.”

Gale flushes and raps Doris’s shoulder, shy at the implication. She laughs loud and unapologetic, snorting humorously as she slowly rises. Her body bends with the grace of a dancer and he watches the line of her shoulders as she turns to touch his face.

“It’s the sixties, baby. The summer of love. You have to believe that you already have it and then you’ll see it everywhere. Everything becomes a sign, you know?”

Gale pushes a curl back from her face as he hears their mother begin to come in.

“It’s like when we were kids. Like make-believe.”

He closes his eyes briefly, to hear the sounds of birds echo through the room. *Like make-believe.*

The birds begin to sound like angels.

❁

John would rather be dead than be back and his mother must know that. Otherwise, she wouldn’t be smiling so horribly in her newly purchased mint gown.

He glances out the window of her apartment he’ll soon be leaving and smiles at the soft fluttering of the leaves. It’s spring about to end but spring nonetheless. Gale’s favorite season. He can only hope that he’s right to assume that Buck has been subject to the constant cajoling of his family to come inside. He loves the world no matter the form it takes, but spring and summer do something to Gale and John can’t help but follow along. Always helpless.

His mother clears her throat loudly and he closes his eyes for a moment, breathing sharply through his nose before turning around and refocusing his attention to the girl she's brought along.

Philippa something-or-other is her name (he thinks), and she looks up at him with all the distaste an unwilling woman can muster. Maybe he can call her Pippa. He gives her a commiserating look and goes to work on his brandy, nursing the aftertaste in hopes of numbing himself to the conversation.

"John has been ready to settle down for a while," his mother gushes. "He's just been waiting for the perfect girl and I think you are just the one, Penelope."

Ah, damn. He liked Pippa better.

Besides, the only person who had somewhat of a hold on him was miles away, languishing beneath a large pear tree with those baby blues opened wide. It was like Gale believed he could swallow the blossoms whole without opening his saccharine, soft mouth.

His thoughts sway away from the scene in his living room and once again he finds Buck's lips in the evening-darkened petals of his mother's peonies. He would be laughing at him, now, at his clear disinterest and the way his mother was trying to keep her anger at bay. And John would let him because he would rather be a fool for Gale than for anyone else.

The sky continues to die out and John feels tired. He wishes things would change, that there was a different hand holding his to get him through.

❁

Gale is, unfortunately, cleaning when John comes to visit them, which means that it's Doris who gets the door and then inappropriately screams his name up the banister. He's been under the impression that he wouldn't see his best friend until dinner, so it's really not his fault that his foot slips out from under him halfway down the stairs. He grabs the railing to steady himself.

"John, honey! It's wonderful to see you," croons his mother.

She comes gliding out of some secret corner of the house with her hands against her chest, her skin glowing quite impressively in a dress the shade of wheat in the sun. Gale feels a ridiculous ache in his chest as if everyone has gotten to John before him and he's been left behind.

He tucks an errant golden strand behind his ear irately and makes use of the feather duster that's drooping miserably in his hand. He dusts as if the railing needs to be gleaming for him to live with it and he pretends he doesn't hear the soft steps of John moving closer and closer to him.

"My Buck."

Gale spins around, a feather slipping out of the duster and landing peacefully on a step. *My* Buck? Or did he mean *my*, Buck,? Was he surprised at how he appeared before him? Concerned? Gale's hand clutched tighter and tighter around the wooden handle of the duster, so much so that Doris practically ran up the stairs to rescue it from him.

"Bucky."

Although he will always try, nothing will ever prevent the breathless way Gale speaks his name. It's the thought that counts, he supposes.

He blushes heavily and looks away for a moment, unable to keep a direct gaze on those luminous, sharp, blue eyes. When he looks back John stands there, looking incredibly fond of him. It makes Gale smile bashfully. He's missed him, more than anything. At some point, the letters stopped being enough. He'd wanted more. He always has, a trait he believed he'd gotten from his father.

"Hi," he says, his smile wide and shining.

"Hey, Buck."

"I'm glad that you—I mean it's nice to—" He stops, frustrated and embarrassed with his lack of commanding the English language currently, and decides to just be as honest as he can without getting teased. "I missed you."

John smiles brightly and you'd think that he'd been told that he was to come into a large sum of money. His eyes crinkle at the sides and he walks forward until he's a step below Gale, looking up and taking a tan hand into his.

“I missed you too, good-looking.”

Gale sighs indulgently at the nickname—Bucky was always a flirt—and smooths down the front of his pants. They’re mink brown and slightly worn, his favorite pair for the house. He knows his shirt would be categorized as worn too, unbuttoned, and a little too big for him.

They look at each other in a frozen moment that extends only to the two of them. Doris coughs softly and John blinks like a startled deer, releasing Gale’s hand and stepping away to a more appropriate distance.

“So,” he begins, eyes never leaving the vision of Gale on the stairs, “I just came to inquire about the general feeling toward warm pears being served as dessert tonight.”

He makes an effort to look around at both Doris and Mrs. Cleven, even smiling widely at the sneaky appearance of Meatball. They all know it’s a pitiful attempt to cover the fact that he cares only for Gale, but they ignore it.

“I love pears! Never had them warmed before! It sounds wonderful and so Parisian. Make sure they’re sweet, please.” Doris is exceptionally bright as she speaks and it makes John laugh.

After Gale, he doted on her as if she was his sister.

“Yes, Lady D, I’ll make sure that they’re extra sweet. Just for you.”

Doris nods, easily pleased, and tugs at Mrs. Cleven’s hand to go back outside. Gale’s mother kisses John’s cheek and comments on seeing him later in the evening. Doris gifts John with a final knowing smile, silently teasing him about his need to see her brother, though her eyes are soft and unbearably kind. Lastly, Gale turns and begins to head up the stairs.

“Buck?”

Gale stops and blinks down at the lanky man below him, eyes crinkling like paper as he grins with a closed mouth.

“Pears?” John asks almost nervously, eyes searching for an answer.

Gale knows he’s playing dumb. He answers him anyway.

“I love pears, Bucky.”

“Yeah,” John says cheekily, boyish and pleased. “I know.”

❁

There’s the wonderful sound of jazz floating from out of the townhouse paired with the deep ink of the night, and it causes a desperate pain in Gale’s ribs. There are always moments when he wants time to still and let him keep them forever. This is one.

He hasn’t been to Bucky’s place in what feels like years, but it doesn’t fail to still rupture his chest, its beauty causing his mouth to part the slightest bit in awe. He’s arrived first, sent solo in his car by his mother. He felt as though she was being ridiculously insistent but now he was grateful. He’d been given time alone.

He picks up his pace and walks forward, his heart hungry.

He loves this apartment; he remembers that now. He had never wanted to leave. And then—and then Bucky had told him that it could be his too if he wanted and he’d cried, horrified at the obviousness of his desire and they had never spoken of it again. He shook his head to rid himself of the memory and foot by foot he claimed more ground, again and again.

John glances fleetingly out of his window and practically breaks his neck when he goes to look again. He presses his hands against the sill as he bends to truly make sure he isn’t simply hallucinating out of sheer delusion. But no, there is Buck in a midnight blue scoop-neck sweater that clings to his skin, his blonde hair curling charmingly at the nape of his neck.

John sits down heavily on the cushion he’d placed there for a more comfortable reading experience and continues to watch him, mouth twitching with eagerness.

The sweater is gorgeous, the neckline flattering and baring the expanse of Gale’s throat to the human eye. It’s just a fucking sweater,

but it makes John want to suck a mark delicately against the skin. He wants to do a lot of things if he's being honest, but right now he'd give anything to gently kiss the pale, moony skin of Gale's collarbones till he was shivering sweetly beneath him. He can see it now: those baby pink lips open with pleasure and those full hips pitching forward for friction.

Goddamn.

He closes his eyes to get a hold of himself and then opens them, a sudden thought occurring. Gale is here by himself. He'd been sent alone purposefully, most likely to optimize his time with John. He could've kissed Mrs. Cleven had she been there.

Without further delay he's down the stairs, throwing open the door and startling Gale. John goes to apologize but can't help the laugh that trickles out instead. Gale aches for him to laugh forever. There's a tenderness that always settles behind his teeth whenever John is happy.

"Bucky! *Fuck*, you scared me."

"Sorry, Buck. I saw you through the window and you looked so damn good and I just couldn't help myself. I never can with you."

Gale blushes and turns away to give himself some saving grace. Bucky is never coy when they're alone. He speaks so candidly of his desire for Gale that it makes him dizzy. Even after many years of this dance, something still prevented Gale from holding out his own bleeding heart for John to eat. He tried not to think too much about it.

It wasn't that he didn't love him, it was violently the opposite. If the world needed fire all you'd have to do was take Gale as he was, full to the brim with feeling, and set him against a candle. There would be an instant flame.

The only thing that came close enough to describing his love for John was the thought of death. It was like falling into an abyss and hoping that you came out unscathed from the other side. Love could be both intemperate and restful. Gale wouldn't give it up for anything.

"What are you thinking about?"

"You," Gale said, honest and vulnerable. "Always you, Bucky. You know this."

“But it helps me live a little longer if I hear you say it.”

Gale’s eyes fill inexplicably with tears. He wants nothing more than to kiss him.

“Oh, honey,” John murmurs in his low voice. “You really *did* miss me, huh?”

“Don’t ask stupid fucking questions, John.”

The use of his given name makes Bucky move forward, an arm coming to settle around Gale’s waist as he shepherds him inside. The door closes behind them and Gale stares at the floor, shamed by the sudden rush of emotion.

Soft lips place a firm kiss against his basket of curls, and Gale slowly relaxes.

“I missed you too. You would’ve loved Paris. When it’s not all torn up, it’s beautiful.”

“Yeah?” Gale asks, his voice rough.

“Mmhmm,” John says, stepping away for a moment. “I brought you something, hold on.”

Gale looks around as Bucky leaves him, eyes catching on the bits of decor that make this place truly his. Framed is Bucky’s bomber jacket, his sunglasses perched just below it on the foyer table.

Gale goes to walk upstairs but is stopped by another picture frame glittering just out of sight behind a fountain of faux magnolias. Nimbly he slides it out and is met with a watercolor portrait of himself, his eyes squeezed tightly with joy. It’s only a headshot, the sketch dripping off into blank white after the line of his bare shoulders.

He knows the exact photo this is referencing and yet, it feels like he’s never seen it before. There’s something intimate about his shoulders being bare. He understands why it’s hidden.

He’s still staring when John appears behind him. He smells like he always does, so thick with sea salt and vetiver. Gale doesn’t move when Bucky thumbs at the side of his neck, his deep voice shuddering through him.

“Told you. I thought of you all the time. I wanted to be in Paris *with* you.”

“Who did this?”

“A neighbor. They’re real understanding over there, you know?”

Gale shakes his head. He doesn’t know and it kills him.

“I’d get drunk and just lose myself. I’d babble on like a damn kook,” John says against his temple, a hand around his waist to keep Gale anchored. “Kept telling people that you were an angel and I wanted to plaster myself all over you. I didn’t sell the apartment in case you wanted to go back with me.”

“Bucky, you’re wasting money,” Gale chastises and John turns him around.

“Don’t care,” is all he answers, and its so easily reckless, like he’s always been.

Gale doesn’t know what to do with that so he distracts.

“What did you get me? Better be something nice.”

Bucky grins and shifts something out of his jean pocket. Gale can’t help but laugh when he sees the familiar colors of the Lucky Strike cigarette box.

“You sure know how to spoil a man, Bucky,” he says drily. “You know I don’t smoke.”

“I know. But I do,” John says and he lights up, throat flexing as he inhales.

With a firm hand, he leads Gale to the bottom of the stairs that go up to the second landing, guiding him down so that they’re both tucked onto the same step. There’s a disarming tenderness in the way John thumbs his mouth open so he can push the smoke in, and Gale closes his eyes and lets his head get hazy with the nicotine.

They did this all the time, during the war. The routine was simple: slip out to the tarmac with the moon at its highest point and sit there, drinking smoke from each other until you’re large-eyed and tired.

“I don’t think your folks are coming anymore,” Bucky murmurs.

Gale feels his walls collapse, a grenade set off by the feel of Bucky's body, and he slides into the other's lap. With one hand he steadies himself while the other cradles John's face so that he can suck up the smoke.

Bucky looks fucked in the best way possible and Gale needs him so brutally that it almost sends him swaying.

"Tell me," he urges, sick with it like a woman. Bucky's woman. "Tell me about Paris."

"Well," Bucky whispers, "in Paris, they kiss like this."

That's all the warning he gets before Bucky's warm tongue is in his mouth, stroking along his own like he's trying to map the territory. Gal kisses back with enthusiasm, all the years of repression breaking clean in two with a bright shattering that only he can hear.

This love is going to kill him.

There's a weight behind his eyes and warmth spreading beneath Bucky's hands on his hips. He spreads his legs and falls back, his sweater riding up and revealing his tanned stomach.

He doesn't give a fuck that they're in the hallway. He almost wishes there were windows.

Bucky crawls over him, always following, sucking mottled bruises onto his ribs.

He can see all the signs. He can hear angels singing. Maybe they're in between his thighs.

Bucky seems to agree.

He wonders if this is what heaven feels like. Beautiful and raw.

You have no idea how standoffish I can be with people I don't love. I have brought it to a fine art. But you have broken down my defenses. And I don't really resent it. — *Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*

End Notes

thank you for reading and i love you so much. please feel free to leave comments. i always, always respond.

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